

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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PLS PASS TO HERBERT LEVIN DCM COLOMBO, PRATT BYRD

FOLLOWING REPEAT COLOMBO 3075 ACTION SECSTATE
INFO NEW DELHI MADRAS 23 AUG 77

QUOTE

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: SITUATION REPORT ON VIOLENCE IN SRI LANKA

REF: COLOMBO 3069 (NOTAL)

1. ACCORDING TO ALL REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED, THE PEAK OF
VIOLENCE SEEMS TO HAVE PASSED AND THE SITUATION IN MOST AREAS
IS FAST RETURNING TO NORMAL. THERE HAS BEEN A CONTINUING SERIES
OF MINOR INCIDENTS, BUT NO REPORTS OF MAJOR DISTURBANCES.

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NEW AREAS IN WHICH INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED ARE VAVUNIYA, BAT-
TICALOA, KATURAGAMA, MATARA, AND TRINCOMALEE, WITH DEATHS
REPORTED IN THE LATTER TWO AREAS. TRINCOMALEE IS THE ONLY
AREA FOR WHICH THE CURFEW HAS NOT BEEN LIFTED FOR TODAY,
AUGUST 23. IT WILL BE CONTINUOUS THERE UNTIL 0600 AUGUST 24.

2. THE LATEST ESTIMATE ON THE NUMBER OF DEATHS IS 54, BUT

THE ACTUAL FIGURE MAY WELL BE HIGHER. INCLUDED IN THE DEATHS ARE AN UNKNOWN NUMBER WHO HAVE BEEN SHOT AS LOOTERS BY SECURITY FORCES. THE REFUGEE PROBLEM IS GROWING. THERE REPORTEDLY ARE ABOUT 15,000 PERSONS THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND WHO HAVE SOUGHT REFUGE FROM THE VIOLENCE, MOST OF WHOM ARE PROBABLY TAMIL. APPROXIMATELY 3,000 REFUGEES ARE IN COLOMBO CAMPS AND 1,500 IN GALLE. REPORTEDLY, THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF PROVIDING A SHIP TO EVACUATE REFUGEES FROM GALLE AND COLOMBO TO JAFFNA.

(COMMENT: IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THIS WOULD BE ON A VOLUNTARY BASIS, BUT IN ANY CASE IT WOULD SEEM TO BE THE SORT OF ACTION THAT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO FURTHER POLARIZATION OF THE TAMIL AND SINHALESE COMMUNITIES.)

3. THE INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE WHILE AN INCONVENIENCE FOR TOURISTS HAS NOT PRESENTED ANY THREATS TO THEM. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ACTIVELY ASSISTED THEM WHENEVER NECESSARY, EVEN FLYING A GROUP FROM TRINCOMALEE TO COLOMBO BY GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT.

4. THERE WILL BE AN ISLAND-WIDE CURFEW ON THE ISLAND FROM 2000 AUGUST 23 TO 0400 AUGUST 24. PRESENT PLANS ARE, IF THE SITUATION CONTINUES UNDER CONTROL, TO REDUCE GRADUALLY THE LENGTH OF THE CURFEW HOURS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE GOVERNMENT DETERMINES THE CURFEW CAN BE LIFTED ENTIRELY.

WRIGGINS

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UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER".

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